



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

December 21, 2005

News Release

FRANCISCO JAVIER CASTORENA-IBARRA SENTENCED FOR CONSPIRACY TO LAUNDER MONETARY INSTRUMENTS IN CONNECTION TO COUNTERFEIT IMMIGRATION IDENTIFICATION RELATED DOCUMENTS

DENVER — A high-ranking member of the Castorena Family Organization was sentenced today to 87 months in prison for money laundering related to the production and sale of fraudulent and counterfeit immigration identification documents. The sentence was announced by Bill Leone, U.S. Attorney for the District of Colorado, and Jeffrey Copp, special agent-in-charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Denver Office.

Francisco Javier Castorena-Ibarra, 46, from Mexico City, Mexico, was sentenced today by Chief U.S. District Court Judge Lewis T. Babcock to serve 87 months (more than seven years) in federal prison.

Francisco Javier Castorena-Ibarra along with his brother, Pedro Castorena-Ibarra, are thought to be the masterminds behind one of the largest fraudulent identification document production organizations in the United States. Pedro Castorena-Ibarra was indicted by a federal grand jury July 11 in Denver, and remains a fugitive from justice. During today's sentencing hearing the court recognized that cases like Castorena-Ibarra have a serious impact on the relationship between the United States and the Republic of Mexico. Chief District Judge Babcock also called the breadth and scope of the Castorena Family Organization "breathtaking," and noted that the organization has been linked to the distribution of "millions" of counterfeit identity documents.

On Sept. 22, 2004, Francisco Javier Castorena-Ibarra was indicted by a federal grand jury in Denver on charges related to the conspiracy to produce counterfeit immigration identification documents. On Oct. 7, 2005, Francisco Javier Castorena-Ibarra pleaded guilty to a separate charge of money laundering the proceeds from the sales of counterfeit documents.

According to the plea agreement, Francisco Javier Castorena-Ibarra conspired to manufacture and provide support to produce counterfeit alien registration receipt cards, Social Security cards, and other identification documents to foreign nationals unlawfully in the United States, and others, for a fee. The defendant then employed, and directed others to employ, Western Union to wire transfer the illegal proceeds from the fraudulent document sales from Metro Denver to others in Mexico, California, and elsewhere.

“The production of counterfeit identification documents is crime that has a negative impact on the United States on a number of different levels,” U.S. Attorney Bill Leone said. “At the highest level, counterfeit immigration and identification documents can enable terrorists to move freely within the United States. At the lowest level, these documents hamper law enforcement efforts to determine the true identity of someone they come into contact with.”

“The tremendous extent of the Castorena Family Organization’s fraudulent document ring creates immeasurable security problems nationally and internationally,” said Jeffrey Copp, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent in Charge of the Denver office. “We will likely never know all the terrible ramifications supported by the counterfeit documents this organization created. However, Francisco Javier Castorena-Ibarra is only one of those who will pay for this crime. ICE will work with many other law enforcement agencies to bring to justice those responsible.” Copp heads the ICE Office of Investigations, which includes: Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

This Castorena-Ibarra case has been actively investigated and prosecuted under the direction of Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Mackey, in cooperation with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Central District of California in Los Angeles.

ICE was assisted in this investigation by: the Social Security Administration’s Office of the Inspector General, IRS-Criminal Investigation, and the Postal Inspection Service.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.